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Maguire - Machine - Room Chants - 1891

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FIRST EDITION.

MACHINE-ROOM
CHANTS,

BY

THE LATE

TOM MAGUIRE.

LONDON: 53 FLEET
STREET, E.C.

GLASGOW: 66 BRUNSWICK
STREET.

"LABOUR LEADER."

1895.

✓ 23462.39

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Aug 14, 1929

*"Where faster and faster, our iron master,
The thing we made, forever drives;
Bids us grind treasure, and fashion pleasure
For other hopes and other lives."*

WILLIAM MORRIS.

Tom Maguire.

Whom the Gods love die young, and thus are they insured of everlasting youth. The idea is full of beauty were it not that this weary old world so much needs those on whom the Gods have bestowed their choicest gifts that life by their music and mirth may be made enduring. The verses to which these lines are a foreword are not mirth provoking. They are full as words can be crammed of the tragic pathos of the life of the factory and the workroom. Had Tom Maguire never penned a line save what is here given he could have proved his title to take high rank not only as a poet, but as a deep sighted student of humanity. He sees things as they are, and, avoiding alike a superficial optimism or morbid pessimism, reveals with the touch of a master, the inner workings of the mind of the average working girl, and makes plain much which to the casual observer remains obscure. The Socialist movement, none too rich in men who combine a clear wisdom, unerring judgment, and a large sympathetic heart, could but ill afford to yield back to the gods one gifted young comrade, and yet who had the power to keep him? It is in contemplation to issue a complete collection of his writings, and it is in the belief that what is here given will whet the appetite for more that, in accordance with his original plan, we give to the world his *Machine Room Chants*. The profits on the sale will go to his mother,—as they would in any case have done had her son been alive.

April, 1895.

J. KEIR HARDIE.

These Chants originally appeared in the *Labour Leader*, but Tom Maguire always intended that they should be published subsequently as a separate volume. I think many who knew something of our comrade Maguire and his ten years' work for Socialism in Leeds and Yorkshire, many too who enjoyed some personal friendship with him, and many who only knew the genial wit and sympathetic touch of "Bardolph" may value this small book. To me there is a strange pathos in writing these few words for the publication of my friend's first book after his death. His life long labours for the People and his 'battling with magnificent odds' are not ended with his death, and his poetry is not confined within the covers of this book.

LEEDS.

J. CLAYTON.

ONE Sunday in March, Tom Maguire was laid in the cemetery, Leeds. An unusual, almost an imposing, procession of his comrades in Leeds and neighbouring Yorkshire towns followed his body, borne shoulder high, to the grave. Tears that seldom fall for a mere comrade in political arms wet many and many a cheek.

Tom Maguire was one of the small band of men whom the spirit of the Social Revolution called out from amongst the millions of people in this land to first voice the new hope of Socialism. His name is affixed, together with that of William Morris and twenty-two others, to the Manifesto of the Socialist League, published in the first number of the *Commonweal* in February, 1895. He well knew the humours and the testing struggle of propaganda, when all mankind appeared to be against it.

Now a days, when a really noble soul bids us farewell there are no words available to bemoan his loss, the currency of which has not been debased upon the tombstones of knaves. It has become customary, therefore, to be silent of praise and endearment, when we have much to express, and fulsome of flattery and moan when the lies almost stick in our throats. This inversion of the natural order of speech, matters little perhaps when the dead one has figured greatly before the nation, and his deeds, good or ill, cannot be unsaid by praise of friends or abuse of foe. But it is a hurt to us when men of humble lives and unobtrusive service fall in our midst, and we find ourselves deprived of the use of simple and sincere terms of affectionate testimony.

Tom Maguire is one of these: and the very marvel of the delightfulness of his personality compels expressions of love and sorrow from his comrades, which, to those who did not know him, may seem unfittingly extravagant and superlative.

He was one of those men of whom we seldom meet more than one in a lifetime, who possess that indefinable charm of friendship that suffers not by passing through the furnace heat or killing cold of life's vicissitudes. One of those whose contact with their fellows seems exquisitely adjusted as by a secret art of life.

In nowise a saint: marred indeed, with faults and weaknesses that from the beginning have maimed the effectiveness of the more generous and sensitive spirits of the race, he was nevertheless, beloved, whole heartedly beloved, of his friends—a merit that saints have seldom or ever attained.

His writings possess two great qualities of interest. The first: their real excellence of poetical and dramatic accomplishment; not truly of the highest order of poetry, but of that kind which is almost rarer—which obtains for us, spontaneous, thoroughly expert and vivid transcription of unconstrained thought and emotion. The second: the emanation or fragrance which they yield of the rare gentleness and ever soothing charity and kindness of humour, which he possessed, and which is, perhaps, one of the highest gifts which civilization has yet given to the hearts and heads of men.

The present little collection of "MACHINE ROOM CHANTS" which he compiled for publication immediately before his death, by no means exhibit the full variety of his powers. Their poetical merit—the freshness of light, truthfulness of feeling and effortless song, which he imparts to subjects of every-day factory life, will not, however, be denied by those who have a right to pronounce an opinion. "Barbara" and "The Old Order Changeth" are masterpieces of their kind. It is to be hoped that some day a more complete volume will be published containing a collection of his songs, humorous pieces, and political "squibs." Of the latter, many of which were written "against time" for the cartoons of the *Labour Leader*, there are some which have not been excelled for humour, happiness of phrase, and tunefulness of verse, in the literature of our time.

But we must not overburden this little book with other words than his own. It will, I am sure, be gladly preserved in many a Socialist home as a memento of one of the earliest and youngest of our street-corner agitators, and one of the last but gentlest and best of the old race of genuine wayfaring bards.

J. BRUCE GLASIER.



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Edited by DAVID LOWE.



Barbara.

The firm gave us a holiday.
Our fines made up expenses
For railway fare, for breakfast, and for tea ;
And hadn't we a jolly day ?
We took leave of our senses !
And laughed and carried on like mad,
At Scarboro' by the sea.
And O ! the sea was new to me
At Scarboro', at Scarboro',
A-shining and a-shimmering through a veil of misty grey ;
Its face was fair—but, ah ! its lips
Were fringed with foam, at Scarboro'—
That curled about my feet in scorn and spattered me with spray.

We rolled about on donkeys' backs,
And slipped, and kicked, and shouted ;
We heard the nigger minstrels joke and sing ;
We bought a lot of cheap nick-nacks,
And dodged the men who touted
For photos, fish, and carriage-rides,
And almost everything.
And still the sea looked strange to me
At Scarboro', at Scarboro',
I climbed up Castle Hill and saw it stretching miles away ;
But sooner all alone I'd be,
Than I would be with Barbara,
Who beckoned from a pleasure-boat that sailed within the bay.

O ! Barbara was beautiful,
 And light, and bright, and jolly,
 Yet generous and kind of heart was she—
 While I was only plain and dull,
 And mostly melancholy—
 So Barbara a fav'rite with
 The foremen used to be.
 And though the sea looked wild to me
 At Scarboro', at Scarboro',
 A creepy, shiny monster, twisting sideways, up and down
 Yet sooner in the sea I'd be,
 Than walk along with Barbara—
 Lightly galivanting with the foremen round the town.

We started in the morning, when
 The foremen flourished bottles,
 And gaily passed the liquor round and round ;
 They occupied the time like men—
 Attending to their throttles—
 Who were not really happy till
 Their wits were nearly drowned.
 And fast and free, in giddy glee,
 At Scarboro', at Scarboro',
 The foremen and their favourites went jigging up and down,
 For they were out upon the spree ;
 And they had taken Barbara
 To treat her, and bewilder her, and show her round the town.

We set off home by nine that night—
 The men were drunk and rowdy ;
 We girls were all dog-tired, and sore tried,
 The favourites were a sorry sight,
 They all looked flushed and dowdy,
 Save Barbara, so pale and scared,
 Who sat down by my side.
 And O ! the sea came back to me —
 The restless sea of Scarboro'—
 When, looking in her ghastly face, I saw her troubled eyes.
 “ Are you ill, or like to be,
 And what's amiss, dear Barbara ? ”
 But Barbara said nothing, so I held my peace likewise.

And not a word did Barbara say
 Till months had followed after,
 We wondered what was preying on her mind ;
 For she who once was light and gay
 Had lost her life and laughter
 In Scarboro' on our outing-day
 And left them there behind.
 And though the sea—the mocking sea !—
 Is treacherous at Scarboro',
 And cold as winter's clammy winds that Death delights to fan,
 Yet sooner in its livid waves
 I'd look for pity, Barbara,
 Than seek it in the muddy heart of lust-begotten man.

Barbara took a holiday.
 A letter came next morning
 From Scarboro'—a black line round the rim ;
 It told of *her* who'd passed away
 From reach of human scorning,
 With never a hint concerning the
 Identity of *him* !
 And O ! the sea, the wild, blue sea !
 Holds Barbara, hides Barbara,
 And shields her in its shadow from the glances of the sun ;
 The mermaids chant her R.I.P.—
 She lost her soul in Scarboro',
 And cast away her body where her sorrow was begun.



Unspoken Confidences.

(Not Known of the Lady-Visitor.)

Oh ! I am tired of factory life,
 Tired, tired, as you would be—
 I fain would be a rich man's wife,
 Or any man's wife but a poor man's wife,
 For I am sick of the worry and strife,
 As you would be if you were me.

My eyes are saddened, they once were bright,
 Bright, bright, as yours, ladye,
 My hopes are heavy that once were light,
 And I grow weary, and worn, and white,
 Weary of fading before men's sight,
 And worn by the hateful thought, maybe.

Why do I shrink from a poor wife's lot ?
 Why, why, do you ask, ladye ?
 Oh ! I have lived in the humble cot,
 And know the fears and the cares that rot
 The heart, until even hope's forgot,
 In the dismal round of drudgery.

Drear is the lot of the poor man's spouse,
 Drear, drear and dull, ladye,
 A prison-cell is the poor man's house,
 And what of the rights the law allows ?
 There is no rest for the poor man's spouse,
 There are no rights for such as she.

The factory air is rank and close,
 Close, close, it stifles me,
 The foreman comes and the foreman goes,
 We shrink beneath the look he throws—
 But out in the street the cool wind blows ;
 Sweet and cool are the streets, ladye.

The breath of the grave had damped my brow—
 Cold, cold, and moist, ladye—
 Cold is the breath of the grave on my brow,
 And nearer and nearer to earth, I bow,
 Yet life seemed never so fair as now—
 Never so fair was the world to me !

Alas ! that sin is the world's elect !
 Sin, sin and shame, ladye ;
 While purse-proud virtue stalks erect,
 So boldly, brazenly, circumspect,
 That lowly virtue, in tatters decked,
 Shames in the sight of the Pharisee !

'Tis but a step to the streets, and the roar
 Of life, life—mad life, ladye !
 Only a step from the factory door,
 For a brief, brief span, and but one step more
 To the sullen river—when all is o'er—
 And there is an end to my shadow and me.



The Minotaur.

Here in the heart of the cloud-wrapt town,
 Where strong men thrive upon weak men down,
 Where trade prepares its rank soul for hell—
 Oh, here, along with the damned I dwell !
 And maidens are brought from near and far
 To sate the lust of the Minotaur.
 I prey on your budding womanhood,
 And drain the colour of life from her blood ;
 I scale her skin till 'tis yellow and dry,
 And dim the lustre that lighted her eye ;
 The marrow out of her bones I draw,
 Her breasts I grip with a cancerous claw,
 Her husk, in the end, to the dogs I fling—
 A bloodless, soulless, sexless thing.

Cholera rags, diphtherical tags,
 Are bundled to England in bales and bags,
 Worn-out stockings, and socks, and pants,
 Shirts and bodices, blouses from France,
 Cast-off singlets and derelict rugs—
 The whole lot seething with alien bugs ;
 In short, all wear that has reached its last level,
 Is forwarded Yorkshire—*via* Leeds—to the “ devil.”
 The rags are cast in the “ devil's ” wide maw,
 He tears them to tatters with steel tooth and claw :
 From tatters he rends them asunder to shreds,
 Till nothing remains but manure and fine threads ;
 A few stray hairs from Ability's skull
 Are mixed with the mass, in lieu of sheep's-wool,
 To act as straw acts in the making of bricks,
 Wheron it is sized until—somehow—it sticks ;
 Then dyed in the water of rivers, whose stink
 Can be palpably felt twenty yards from the brink ;
 And thus are the sheddings of every poor body
 Reclaimed from the gutter and made into Shoddy.

Fast and faster flies the machine,
 Threading the soapy seam ;
 Binding the ends of a cloth unclean—
 Hark ! to its steely scream.
 All the hope of your Womanhood
 Crossed by a fateful star ;
 All that is best of her pure heart's blood
 Sapped by the Minotaur.
 Stuffy and foul—the workroom reeks
 With shoddy fumes and breath !
 Breath that tells of disease, and speaks
 Of a silent, creeping death.
 Clothes are cheap in the world to-day—
 Cheaper the women are,
 And mournfully they their tribute pay
 To the factory Minotaur.

As rags to the “ devil,” your maidens to me
 Are thrown, with the Curse on them ;
 And out of the mouth of the brick Castille,
 With clatter of shuttle, and rattle of wheel,
 Shrills the wild requiem !
 And the poor blind souls grope into the night,
 And gather in mists afar—
 They list to the shriek that follows their flight,
 From the blood-fed Minotaur.





The Duchess of Number Three.

“Ahem ! you may look, but don’t touch me, pray !”

Her walk, her style and bearing say—

“ No common trash about me,

 You see.

For I don’t work for my living, like you ;

 My Paw’s a thingummy in the ‘Prue.,’

I could stay at home if I chose to do,”

 Says the Duchess of Number Three.

“ If I work for less, it’s my own concern,

I dress myself with the money I earn—

 It wouldn’t find bread and tea

 For me.

But when lady visitors on us drop,

They come to me and beside me stop,

And so I give a high tone to the shop,”

 Says the Duchess of Number Three.

“ Trade unions are vulgar and low,

My Paw has frequently told me so ;

 They don’t catch hold of men,

 Th’ idee !

And they are vulgar and low things who

Believe in such, and support them, too ;

I’d tell their names if I only knew !”

 Says the Duchess of Number Three.

“It’s stuff and Nonsense for girls to s’pose
The firm can s’ply them with food and clothes
When bad times chance to be,”

Says she.

“My Paw thinks if folk practised thrift,
On next to nothing they might make-shift
Till Providence gave commerce a lift,”

Says the Duchess of Number Three.

“They say I am cutting the other girls out
Who work for their bread and tea—no doubt;
But, thank you ! England’s free,

Te-he !

I will do as I like as long as I dare,
What’s fair to me is my own affair,
And I’ll please myself anyhow—so there !”

Says the Duchess of Number Three.

And the Number Three Department girls
They copy her hat and the cut of her curls—

’Tis a touching sight to see,

Dear me !

Her slightest word is their sacred law,
They run her errands and stand her jaw,
Content to find neither fault nor flaw

In the Duchess of Number Three.



The Novelle Reader.

Tell me a tale and I'll hear with ears alert—and heart as well !
 Yet it must be a tale of life, high life, my thirst to whet,
 Not a story of hopeless toil, for that is my daily lot.
 Read me the loves of high-born dames and, rapt in their loves, I'll heed.
 Then will I laugh and cry with them for love of their hero-men,
 So through shrubbery, park, and wood, in fancy I shall go ;
 All the din of the Singer machine forgotten by me, its thrall—
 Bread and tea and the foreman, and the early morning call.
 For it's tea and bread in the morning, bread and tea at noon,
 Waiting wearily all day long,
 Singing drearily snatches of song,
 Praying for work in the morning—begging the precious boon !
 Till night comes down on my aching eyes—and not too soon.

Lord ! how I loathe the guardian who plots against his ward ;
 Great as I hate the villain—marked to fall at the hands of fate.
 Pure is the lovely heroine, of origin obscure,
 He is noble who wins her—she an heiress proves to be.
 Lo ! the thought springs into my head—and what if I were ?—but no !
 Wild hope laughs at a thought of the thought, for I am a nobody's child.
 To my story of sorrow and love I turn and weep anew,
 Until all things come right in the end, as, at least, in tales they do.
 Tea and bread in the morning, bread and tea at noon,
 Locked outside of the work-house gate,
 Fined for being too late to wait
 For work in the early morning—real life is a doleful tune—
 Till night clouds o'er another dead day—and not too soon.

**Nay, it's not lies in a novelette that leads work-girls astray,
 But the hard-faced fact of a life in one long joyless rut,
 While youth flies on the wing, and dies with a sickly, mocking smile,
 And the curse of a toil-crossed life is all that is left on hand !
 Cold is the winter morning—the cough has a deeper hold !
 Dearth of work, and no wages, with home a hell upon earth—
 Brain and body wasting away—God ! what a cruel toll
 A woman pays to Mammon in the hope of saving her soul !
 Tea and bread in the morning, bread and tea at noon,
 Breathing a poisoned atmosphere
 Till eyes grow leaden and face grows sere ;
 Facing the sleet in the morning, dizzy and like to swoon,
 Till death comes down from a merciful God—and not too soon !**

The Singer Machine.

**Little Ellen came to me fresh out of the country,
 Came and sat before me in her common home-cut gown ;
 Said she meant to master me ; said it with effrontry ;
 Laughed I at her timid touch, as the child sat down.**

**Pink cheeks in the country, chalk cheeks in the town,
 Ellen's were carnation where they were not russet brown.
 Oh the health and promise there ! coming from the country—
 As she touched my shoulder on the morning she sat down.**

**Soon we grew to bosom friends, at her touch I yielded,
 Picking natty stitches with a straight, unbroken thread ;
 Answering her every thought, even as my wheel did—
 Flying at the pressure of her tiny-footed tread.**

Pink cheeks from the country shining on me down,
 Wondering at her white-faced mates who bore the stamp of town;
 Trembling at their heedless jibes—coming from the country—
 Praying that her face and hands were white instead of brown.

Little Ellen murmured low, "O, my heart afraid is!"
 And I felt a tear-drop touch my face of burnished steel;
 For on either hand of her worked the finest ladies—
 Languid, pale, and thin, and worn, and every way genteel.

Pink face from the country, puckered in a frown,
 Pained by every small remark reflecting on her gown;
 Sweet young body, fresh and fair, coming from the country,
 Drinking in the humours of the foul, polluted town.

"Little Ellen," if I could, thus I would make answer:—
 "Fear not that your face is brown, time shall bleach it yet;
 On your left Consumption sits, on your right sits Cancer;
 White disease has blown its breath on all yon bloodless set."

Pink cheeks in the country, chalk cheeks in the town,
 Ellen's deep carnation yet shall merge itself in brown;
 Brown shall change to livid grey—all that speaks the country—
 Soon shall disappear, my dear, and to the worms go down.



The Feller-hand.

If you please, sir, I can't help it ! I'm only a feller-hand ;
 An' low wages means low livin', as perhaps you'll understand.
 Six shillin's was the biggest weekly wage I ever drew,
 But I have to live on less than that—an' how do you think I do ?

If I could earn six shillin's every week all through the year,
 Do you think I'd stand a-shiverin', an' talkin' to you here ?
 But half of it's more like it, what with "slack," an' no time too,
 An' I've got to make the best of it—the best that I can do.

For I haven't no relations to fall back upon, like some ;
 An' I've nothin' in the bank put by, to draw when hard times come ;
 An' I've got to dress respectable, an' pay my way like you,
 An' live somehow besides, sir, as a woman wants to do.

No, I wouldn't like to die, sir, for I think the good Lord's hard
 On us common workin' women ; an' the like o' me's debarred
 From his high, uncertain heaven, where fine ladies all go to.
 So I try to keep on livin', though the Lord knows how I do.

I wonder, an' I wonder, as I sometimes sit and sew,
 If lady callers take us for a sort o' wax-work show ;
 An' what they'd say about us if one half the truth they knew ;
 An' whether they would manage any better than we do.

But the good Lord isn't merciful, for some are born to hell,
 While some are born to heaven here, an' afterwards as well,
 An' good people are so cruel, and kind people—O, so few !
 An' the world goes to the devil, as it cannot help but do.

Good night, sir, if you're goin' ! Thanks—you don't give no advice !
 What I want is food an' clothing, which is mostly virtue's price—
 At least it seems to me so, though I'm but a poor wretch who
 Has tried her best and worst to live, and found it hard to do.

For a Living.

I.

Youth and beauty, pity, ruth,
Love, and all that soars above
Brute-existence, low and mute,

Man is giving—

For a living !

'Tis for this he justifies
His soul's hopeless sacrifice,
This the burden of his sighs—

For a living.

Round the piteous phrase are found
Broken hearts and hopes unspoken ;
And the humans, all unmanned,
Sink below the brute-brink,
Shrinking from heroic death,
Drinking in a poisoned breath—

For a living

All things giving,

And a brutish life receiving.

II.

Christ is hourly sacrificed
In cant-consecrated sin,
By false teachers, trained to lie—

For a living,

The lie giving ;

While the traders, versed in guile,
Pile the rich reward of wile,
Smile and lure like strumpets vile—

For a living.

Cursed at birth, and famine-nursed,
Hollow-eyed the women follow
Life that mocks with endless strife ;
Crowned with but the grave-mound,
Trooping to the streets in crowds,
Drooping maids seek harlot-shrouds—

For a living

Virtue giving,

And a speedy death receiving.

The Old Order Changeth.

" 'Twas the doctor from the hospital, Jane," the old man slowly said—
 The wife looked up at her husband, and again she bowed her head—
 "The doctor's been, an' he talked to me, an' he sez she's dyin' there—
 In Number One Ward, first turn to the right, at the top o' the hospital stair ;
 An' the doctor, he asked would we see her, Jane, an' I sez in his keen face—No !
 An' he called me a harsh old fool, he did, an' I liked him to take on so ;
 Till he talked as to put the blame on me for the loose way Lettie had gone—
 But 'twas dancin' that did it, dancin', I say—"

"An' of course, it was dancin', John."

"I told him as how we brought her up, an' he listened as if he knew,
 An' how she had schoolin' mor'n a bit, an' he just sez, 'Quite right too'—
 How I planted the fear o' God in her with the rod when there was need,
 As my father had done wi' me, Jane, an' the doctor, sez he, 'Indeed !'
 Then I told him about her goin' to work at the new-fangled sewin' machine,
 An' her pickin' up wi' some smart workmates, an' dressin' up like a queen,
 An' her singin', an' larkin', an' chassyin', an' such-like carryin's on—
 But 'twas dancin' I blame for it, dancin', Jane—"

"An' indeed it was dancin', John."

"I went on to say I had warned her, an' was goin' to stand no more
 Of her stayin' out late at parties, an' as how I would bolt the door
 At ten o' the night in future ; which it afterwards came about—
 That she landed home at a quarter-past time, an' found herself locked out,
 An' I mentioned how she had rapped, and knocked, an' cried out to me an' you,
 To let her in for the love o' God ! which you, woman-like, wanted to do ;
 An' the doctor he walked about the room, an' his eyes they fairly shone,
 But 'twas dancin' that started it, that's what I say—"

"Yes, yes, it was dancin', John."

"The doctor, he asked what happened then, an' I sez she went sobbin' away,
 While we laid awake all through the night, and waited all through the day,
 Expectin' her back repentant, an' willin' to take the blame
 For breakin' the Fourth Commandment, but the hussy she never came !
 Then I told him how you fell ill, Jane, an' about the oath I swore
 To let her go her own road to the dogs, an' to speak of her never no more ;
 An' how I took off my hat as I did, wi' my hand the Old Book on,
 An' cursed all their 'cademy dancin'—"

"An' but what did he say, John ?"

“ Well, the doctor he eyed me curious-like, then he suddenly ups an outs,
 Wi’ a oath as big as a bargee’s fist, an’ he turns on me an’ shouts :
 ‘ You would drive a saint to the devil, you would, with your damn’d old puritan ways
 (It isn’t me that’s a-swearin’, Jane—the blame on the doctor lays)—
 You, an’ your rod, an’ your ten o’clock !—we’d still have the curfew-bell
 If we all did just as our fathers,’ he sez—an’ the wild way he went on,
 When ’twas dancin’ that did it—not me at all——”
 “ An’ well, mebbe ’twas dancin’, John.”

“ He quieted down in a while, and sez, ‘ I’m sorry I spoke so strong,
 But it’s well-meant, misplaced acts like yours that make for so much wrong.
 When girls go into the factory they are drilled, an’ driven, an’ tried,
 An’ they want some relaxation away from their own fireside.
 It’s too much to ask of a woman pent up all day in the shop,
 To take on the duties of home besides, and forever at home to stop ;
 The world is wider to her than it was to our mothers in times bygone ;
 An’ dancin’s all right, in itself,’ ses he——”

“ An’ perhaps he was right too, John.”

“ You never mind that, what he says is this, ‘ The woman who earns her bread
 Is a lot more independent than the one who lives to get wed ;
 An’ she’s safe enough to be trusted for to keep from coming to grief,
 But it’s doubting and crying down all she does that plays the most mischief.
 Most that is bad, is bad because good dull folk *will* have it so,
 And souls are sent to perdition, sometimes, when the godly whisper low,
 Where never a wrongful thing was done, and wrong thought there was none.’
 The doctor, he sez, lookin’ fierce at me——”

“ An’ God bless him for speakin’, John !”

“ An’ he ses she was under the ether, for they had to cut her deep,
 For a deadly spreadin’ cancer, Jane, an’ she dropped some words in her sleep,
 An’ talked about us, the doctor sez, in such a heart-broken way,
 That he waited until she came to herself to hear what she would say.
 An’ she’s dyin’, an’ longin’ to see us, Jane—her husband bein’ dead,
 There isn’t a friend but the doctor to sit by our poor child’s bed—
 An’ it’s Number One Ward—are we goin’, Jane, before our Lettie is gone ?”
 The old wife’s heart gushed into her eyes—

“ An’ thank Heaven, we’ll go now, John.”



An Under-Paid Agitator.

It's cruel to cut things so fine—

It's strange that the girls will not learn
To fall into line, and boldly combine
To keep up the wages they earn.
The slightest reduction, it drives
And goads us, and sweats us the more ;
Since all of us strive—and some may contrive—
To earn just as much as before.
And first when I entered the work-girls' union,
I put it to Sarah Anne Lee ;
But she laughed in my face and called me a "luny 'un,"
"No union but marriage for me !"

Says she.

It's shameful to put us on "piece,"

And fine us at times if we're late,
When the work in the shop has come to a stop,
And there's nothing to do but to wait.
And it's worse to be fined for a stitch
That a minute or two would set right,
But they drop on us hot, if a fault they can spot,
And, as often as not, out of spite.
And I put it to Sarah Anne Lee, that the union
Said fines such as them shouldn't be ;
But she snapped and declared I was always a "moony 'un,"
"The tight marriage union for me !"

Says she.

She married, did Sarah Anne Lee,
He wasn't a duke or an earl,
But a common-place chap, with his head full of sap,
And the hair of it nicely in curl.
They had a full week's honeymoon,
And then she came back to her place,
For the chap she had wed didn't earn much, she said,
On account of his very young face.
But she cared for him more than she cared for the union,
And therefore I let her a-be ;
"She fancied I wasn't cut out for a 'spoony 'un,'
Like poor unfortunate *me*,"

Laughed she.

The Watches of the Night.

I had waited, mutely waited,
 Unmarried and unmated,
 Till my very soul and senses had grown dumb;
 And I wondered if the bride,
 I had dreamt of in my pride,
 Would from out the murky, dusty, hidden future ever come..

But she's coming, coming,
 I hear the fife and drumming,
 Heralding her happy way—
 She's coming, coming,
 The air around is humming
 With the music of the silvery feet
 Of Socialism coming.

Oh! the wide outlook was dreary,
 And my eyes were tired and weary,
 For my hopes were burnt to ashes cold and white;
 My heart was sick and faint,
 And I felt the deadly taint
 Of the dull despair that hovers round the watches of the night..

But she's coming, coming,
 I hear the fife and drumming,
 Heralding the happy way—
 Turning night to light and day';
 She's coming, coming,
 The air around is humming
 With the music of the silvery feet
 Of Socialism coming.

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